

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-12. (canceled).

13. (currently amended): A digital communication network element system comprising a plurality of modules, including at least one input module and a plurality of internal modules;

 said at least one input module and said plurality of internal modules being interconnected;

 said at least one input module comprising:

 means for receiving an external communication input signal,

 means for monitoring said external communication input signal for defects,

 means for squelching said external communication input signal entirely such that said squelching can be detected by amplitude or frequency detection without bit or byte analysis when a defect is detected, and

 input module means for outputting said squelched external communication input signal as an internal signal when a defect is detected; and

 at least one of said plurality of internal modules comprising:

 means for receiving an internal signal from one of the plurality of modules, and

 means for monitoring whether said received internal signal is squelched.

14. (previously presented): The digital communication network element system of claim 13, wherein said input module means for outputting outputs said external communication input signal as an internal signal when a defect is not detected.

15. (currently amended): The digital communication network element system of claim 13, wherein said at least one of said plurality of internal modules further comprises: means for receiving a redundant internal signal from another one of said plurality of modules;

internal module means for outputting said redundant internal signal as an internal signal when said received internal signal is detected as squelched.

16. (previously presented): The digital communication network element system of claim 15, wherein:

 said internal module means for outputting outputs said received internal signal as an internal signal when said received internal signal is not detected as squelched.

17. (previously presented): The digital communication network element system of claim 15, wherein:

 said at least one of said plurality of internal modules further comprises means for monitoring said received internal signal for defects; and

said internal module means for outputting outputs said redundant internal signal as an internal signal when a defect is detected, and outputs said received internal signal as an internal signal when a defect is not detected and said received internal signal is not detected as squelched.

18. (currently amended): The digital communication network element system of claim 13, wherein:

 said plurality of modules further include at least one output module;
 said output module comprising:
 means for receiving an internal signal from one of said plurality of internal modules;
 means for monitoring whether said received internal signal is squelched;
 means for receiving a redundant internal signal from another one of plurality of internal modules; and

 output module means for outputting said redundant internal signal as an output signal when said received internal signal is detected as squelched.

19. (previously presented): The digital communication network element system of claim 18, wherein said output module means for outputting outputs said received internal signal as an output signal when said received internal signal is not detected as squelched.

20. (previously presented): The digital communication network element system of claim 13, wherein at least one of said monitoring means comprises a threshold detector.

21. (previously presented): The digital communication network element system-of claim 13, wherein at least one of said monitoring means comprises a frequency detector.

22. (previously presented): The digital communication network element system-of claim 13, wherein said system is a cross-connect device and wherein at least one of said plurality of internal modules is a switching matrix component.

23. (previously presented): The digital communication system-network element of claim 13, wherein a squelched signal comprises a zero signal.

24. (currently amended): A method for processing a data signal within a communication device, said communication device comprising a plurality of modules, including at least one input module and a plurality of internal modules, said method comprising:

receiving, by said at least one input module, an external communication input signal, monitoring, by said at least one input module, said external communication input signal for defects,

squelching, by said at least one input module, said external communication input signal entirely such that said squelching can be detected by amplitude or frequency detection without bit or byte analysis when a defect is detected, and

outputting, by said at least one input module, said squelched external communication input signal as an internal signal when a defect is detected;

receiving, by at least one of said plurality of internal modules, an internal signal from one of said plurality of modules, and

monitoring, by said at least one of said plurality of internal modules, whether said received internal signal is squelched.

25. (currently amended): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 24, further comprising:

outputting, by said at least one input module, said external communication input signal as an internal signal when a defect is not detected.

26. (currently amended): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 24, further comprising:

receiving, by said at least one of said plurality of internal modules, a redundant internal signal from another one of said plurality of modules; and

outputting, by said at least one of said plurality of internal modules, said redundant internal signal as an internal signal when said received internal signal is detected as squelched.

27. (previously presented): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 26, further comprising:

outputting, by said at least one of said plurality of internal modules, said received internal signal as an internal signal when said received internal signal is not detected as squelched.

28. (previously presented): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 26, further comprising:

monitoring, by said at least one of said plurality of internal modules, said received internal signal for defects;

outputting, by said at least one of said plurality of internal modules, said redundant internal signal as an internal signal when a defect is detected; and

outputting, by said at least one of said plurality of internal modules, said received internal signal as an internal signal when a defect is not detected and said received internal signal is not detected as squelched.

29. (currently amended): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 24, said plurality of modules of said communication device further including at least one output module, said method further comprising:

receiving, by said output module, an internal signal from one of said plurality of internal modules;

monitoring, by said output module, whether said received internal signal is squelched;

receiving, by said output module, a redundant internal signal from another one of said plurality of internal modules; and

outputting, by said output module, said redundant internal signal as an output signal when said received internal signal is detected as squelched.

30. (previously presented): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 29, further comprising:
outputting, by said output module, said received internal signal as an output signal when said received internal signal is not detected as squelched.

31. (previously presented): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 24, wherein at least one of said monitoring steps comprises a threshold detection.

32. (previously presented): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 24, wherein at least one of said monitoring steps comprises a frequency detection.

33. (previously presented): The method for processing a data signal within a communication device of claim 24, wherein a squelched signal comprises a zero signal.